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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Identical letters dated 28 February 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

In accordance with instructions received from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 25 February 2017 and the statement of the Spokesperson and Head of Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 26 February 2017 regarding the recent provocation on the front line by the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 32 and 37, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 28 February 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan

25 February 2017

The enemy carried out a large-scale provocation along the entire front line.

On 25 February at midnight, Armenian Armed Forces' military units made an attempt to penetrate into the positions of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces in different directions with the aim of carrying out a large-scale provocation on the front line.

As a result of constant surveillance of the enemy, setting up ambushes and combat security, the enemy action had been identified in advance. The military units of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces took firm measures to prevent the enemy penetration to the depth of our defence.

Fierce fighting took place between the enemy, trying to seize advantageous positions in the Khojavand-Fizuli direction of the front, and our military units.

The enemy forces were forced to retreat as a result of the brave action of the units of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces, which were standing in ambush set up in this direction.

The Azerbaijani side suffered losses as a result of the fighting.

Failing to move forward in various areas, the enemy, using heavy artillery, subjected to fire the positions of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces.

In accordance with the operational situation, appropriate countermeasures are taken against the firing positions and staging areas of the enemy.

Statement by Hikmat Hajiev, Spokesperson and Head of Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

26 February 2017

As stated by the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 25 February, at midnight the armed forces of Armenia made an attempt to penetrate into the positions of the armed forces of Azerbaijan with the aim of conducting large-scale provocation on the front line and trying to seize advantageous positions in the Khojavand-Fizuli direction of the front.

The escalation of the situation on the front and the perpetration of military provocations are a continuation of Armenia's political provocations such as the holding of an illegal "referendum" in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan on 20 February 2017. The political and military provocations of Armenia are aimed at deliberate escalation of the situation and undermining the efforts for a solution of the conflict via the substantive talks, diverting the attention of the international community on the anniversary of the Khojaly genocide from the responsibilities borne by Armenia for Khojaly, and strengthening the already lost social support base and position of Armenia's ruling regime in forthcoming parliamentary elections in Armenia.

The Azerbaijani side has repeatedly emphasized that the illegal presence of armed forces of Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan remains the prime reason for the escalation of the situation. The events that occurred in April last year proved it over again. The international community, particularly the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs at the Heads of State level, on many occasions stated that the status quo is unacceptable and unsustainable and must be changed.

With a view to preventing the escalation of the situation and changing the status quo of occupation, and ensuring sustainable peace in the region, full and unconditional withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan has to be provided based on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The instigator of the escalation of the situation on the front is Armenia and therefore all responsibility falls on the political-military leadership of Armenia.